



# THE SLG ADVISOR

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## COURAGE, LOVE, AND A LEAP OF FAITH

### *A Client's Very Special Story*

In 30 years of practice, I have probably represented several thousand people in various matters. There are those clients who stand out for good reasons, and some for not-so-good reasons. I've represented priests and murderers, people who were the epitome of kindness and people who just plain sucked. But I recently represented a client who will forever be considered one of my most courageous and special clients for something he and his wife did six years ago. I'm honored to call him my client and to tell their story here.

I have changed all the names to protect my client's privacy so let's call them Mary and John. Mary and John are a married couple in their mid-40s, who six years ago had two children, a 10-year-old son and an 8-year-old daughter. They lived together as a family in a small apartment in East Boston. Mary and John are hardworking people. Mary is a community organizer and John is a truck driver working for the state.

Their son Michael at the time was in the fifth grade and he had a very close friend at school named Joseph. He and Joseph were buddies, and they

did everything together. But Michael noticed that Joseph would sometimes come to school in the dead of winter with no coat, short sleeves, and inappropriate winter shoes. He was often very hungry as he told Michael that sometimes his foster family only fed him once a day. Michael was troubled by this information and would tell his mom about Joseph's plight. It broke Mary's heart to hear these stories. One day, Michael came home from school crying and told his mom that Joseph was going to be uprooted out of his foster home and would have to leave his current school, and therefore he and Joseph could no longer be friends.

Mary, being the special person she is, began to wonder how she could help Joseph. So, she went to her husband John and started explaining the situation to him. John, being an equally special human and knowing where Mary was going with her ideas, looked at Mary and said, "So do want to adopt him?" Mary said yes, and with that amazing act of love a young boy's life was forever changed. (I'm not crying, you're crying!)

For the last six years, Mary and John have raised Joseph as their child, loving him and caring for him like they do their biological son and daughter. This was a HUGE decision for John and Mary, as not only did they have a son within the family dynamic, but they also had a young daughter who was only two years younger than Joseph and Michael. They needed to consider how bringing a child into their home would impact their son and daughter. Yes, the lessons their biological children would learn about love and compassion would be immeasurable, but they also needed to contemplate how potential issues resulting from Joseph's childhood trauma could affect their children. These are big considerations, and Mary and John's love and courage to press forward just blew me away.

This story gets even more amazing. When Mary and John received paperwork relating to Joseph, they learned that not only was Joseph born on the same day as their son, Michael, but he was also born in the same hospital. Mary and Joseph's biological mother were delivering their children

*Continued on Pg. 3 ...*

# PREVENTING DRUG ABUSE

## The Signs to Watch For

Drug abuse and dependency are some of the toughest battles that anyone can face. Nearly everyone has had firsthand experience or watched a loved one battle drug addiction. I've lost a close loved one to a drug overdose and watched a sibling struggle with drug abuse for decades. Seeing the toll it took on their lives was devastating at times.

If you're a parent, you probably want to do everything in your power to keep your children away from drugs. One of the best ways to do this is by making yourself a resource for your children. Make yourself available to your children, so they feel comfortable talking to you about things that are happening in their life. If their friends are doing things they shouldn't, you may hear about it and will be able to intervene to hopefully prevent your child from joining the destructive activity.

It can be difficult to tell if your child is on drugs since many symptoms of drug use are similar to teenage and young adult behavior. Watch for changes to their personality. They may appear to be more withdrawn, hostile, secretive, or less motivated than in the past. Check for signs on their body by looking at their eyes to see if they're red or glazed over. If they are wearing long sleeves in hot weather, it could be a sign that they're hiding something under those sleeves like needle marks. Your kids may be staying out later and feeling worse physically each day. Your senses are one of the best ways to tell if your child is on drugs, so use them.

If you find they are using drugs, do not be confrontational in your approach. Try to be understanding and explain to them the dangers of drug use. If that doesn't work for you, you can always reach out to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) national helpline at 1-800-662-4357 or text your zip code to 435748.



# PROTECT YOU

## FROM BULLYING, MANIPULATION, AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT

The internet has changed a lot about how our world operates. While there have been many positives that come with the internet, there are many negatives. Bullying, manipulation, and sexual harassment are all incredibly prevalent across the internet, especially on social media. And it's affecting our kids. If you're a parent of a teenager, it's crucial that you know what to do if you think your child is being bullied or harassed online.

If your child is being cyberbullied or harassed, they may appear more withdrawn or depressed than usual. According to cyberbullying.org, nearly 37% of kids aged 12-17 have been victims of cyberbullying at some point in their lives. If you think your child is being cyberbullied, there are things you can do to stop it before it gets worse.

Talk with your child about cyberbullying and assure them that if they become the target of a bully, they can

## Review of the Month



*"Spada Law Group is hands down the best. I was lucky to never be put in a position that I needed an attorney before, so this was all new to me. They made the process smooth and clear. Joan is amazing, always provided me with quick responses, kept me in the loop about everything, and most importantly, cared about what was right for me. From beginning to end I had nothing but such a positive experience. I would highly recommend anyone who needs an attorney to please come here; you will not be disappointed!"*

**-Anonymous**

# OUR KIDS ONLINE

## ONLINE HARASSMENT

come to you for help. If they do become the victim of a cyberbullying attack, they should block the bully and unfriend them across all social media platforms they use. Depending on the severity of the threat or the nature of the harassment, parents should print out all correspondence and turn it over to local law enforcement. If the bullying is relentless, it may be better to close your child's accounts and reopen them with enhanced privacy settings.

Additionally, there are ways to prevent cyberbullying from ever happening in the first place. Check the privacy settings for all of your children's accounts. Make sure your kids aren't sending compromising photos to people and that they haven't shared their passwords with anyone, even friends. If they get messages on their posts or pictures, make sure they take time to think about how to respond. Responding out of anger can make things worse.

Cyberbullying, manipulation, and sexual harassment can happen to anyone. Take the necessary steps to prevent it from happening and take action when you need to. As a parent, you may need to intervene to ensure your children are protected online.



*... continued from Cover*

at the same time and in the same location. I'm sorry, but I see much more than a coincidence in this confluence of events. I see fate!

Today, Joseph is thriving as a senior in high school near the top of his class academically. He has done an internship at Massachusetts Institute of Technology as a high school student and plans to attend an Ivy League college. Based on his grades and class rank, his ambitions are well within reach.

When John told me this story in my office, I was riveted and had trouble refocusing on the legal aspects of his case. I just wanted to know more about this amazing man and his story. I knew then and there that in all my years of practicing law, John was in a league of his own as one of my all-time favorite clients.

*-Len Spada*

## Vegan Red Lentil Pasta

*Over the past few months, I've been on a vegan kick in an effort to live healthier. In my journey, I've come across many vegan dishes that taste amazing, but one that stands out above the rest is this lentil pasta dish.*

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 1/2 lbs red lentil pasta
- 1 jar of arrabbiata sauce (I prefer to use Rao's)
- 2-3 cups chopped artichoke hearts (canned or frozen)
- 1/2 cup sliced kalamata olives
- 1/4 tsp sea salt
- Few pinches of freshly ground black pepper
- 1/3 cup julienned fresh basil leaves

### DIRECTIONS

1. Cook pasta according to package directions.
2. After the pasta is cooked, drain the water but do not rinse.
3. Return pasta to pot and place over low heat.
4. Add arrabbiata sauce, artichoke hearts, olives, salt, and pepper.
5. Stir gently to heat through.
6. Once heated, add the basil just to wilt, and serve.
7. Enjoy!

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# INSIDE

Courage, Love, and a Leap of Faith

The Signs of Drug Abuse in Young Adults

Ways to Prevent and Stop Online Bullying

Testimonial

Vegan Red Lentil Pasta

It's National Gratitude Month!



Scan to follow us on social media!



## Thanksgiving Is About More Than Food

### IT'S ABOUT SHOWING GRATITUDE

As we prepare for our Thanksgiving feasts, Thursday night football games, and Black Friday shopping, take some time to show gratitude for those around you and for what you have. Here are a few ways to practice gratitude this month.

#### Appreciate everything.

Get into the habit of being grateful for the little things in your life. It can be easy to acknowledge the "big" things, but nothing is too small to be thankful for. You can be grateful the weather is nice and sunny, that you received the package you've been waiting for, or that you got out of bed today. Don't leave out anything when practicing gratitude.

#### Practice mindfulness.

Mindfulness is the ability to be fully present and aware of what's happening

around you. So, instead of being overwhelmed by what you need to do tomorrow or next week, focus on the present moment and enjoy the time you spend solo or with your loved ones. Live in the moment and take one day at a time. Tomorrow will surely come, and you only have a limited amount of time in the present.

#### Celebrate your challenges.

Sometimes struggles and battles in our lives can weigh us down. But when you persevere and continue to push forward, you will find success. Challenges help you improve your abilities and resilience, so celebrate the progress you've made. Showing gratitude for challenges and negative experiences allows us to

acknowledge humility and appreciate growth in our lives.

#### Keep a journal.

Writing down the things you're grateful for will remind you of all the great things you have when other things aren't going so well. So, keep a journal about what you're grateful for each day or week — even if it's just small things at first. Your perspective on life will change, and it will get easier to see the good things and to feel grateful for things you were likely overlooking.

Showing gratitude is something we should do every day, all throughout the year — not just during the holidays.

So, try to practice mindfulness and gratitude using these tips! Happy Thanksgiving, everyone!

